



SENSE: Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone

(Nova Scotia Education for Sustainable Development Working Group)

Introduction

Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone (SENSE) is a group of organizations, businesses and individuals dedicated to the promotion of ideas and practices which will help Nova Scotia become sustainable. SENSE is part of a national network of Provincial and Territorial Working Groups striving to achieve the objectives of the United Nations' Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) from 2005-2014.

Background

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Canada adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive blue print for sustainable development. Chapter 36 of the Agenda states that all education and training "should be reoriented toward sustainable development." Ten years later, after the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002, the United Nations' General Assembly passed a resolution to declare the period 2005-2014 the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD).

The lead UN agency for the DESD is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The goal of the Decade is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning (<http://www.unesco.org/education/desd>). UNESCO hopes that this educational effort will encourage behaviour changes that will create a more sustainable future. UNESCO has identified the key action areas of education for sustainable development to be sustainable consumption, sustainable urbanization, gender equality, health promotion, environment, rural development, cultural diversity, and peace & human security.

Canada endorsed the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and appointed Environment Canada to oversee its implementation. As education is a provincial responsibility, Environment Canada is working closely with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) and the national non-profit organization Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF). In 2005, Environment Canada created a National Expert Council for Education for Sustainable Development and began funding working groups in seven provinces and one territory as a pilot project to advance education for sustainable development in the school system and in society. SENSE was established in February 2006.

Structure

SENSE is an active multi-stakeholder network that is promoting sustainability education in the formal, non-formal, and informal education sectors in Nova Scotia. Over 150 individuals/organizations have joined SENSE. Our partners are from different sectors representing government, school boards, teachers, community, industry, and non-governmental organizations. Our working group is coordinated by a part-time coordinator and governed by a volunteer steering committee. There is also an advisory body of members and external partners that assists with SENSE. Core funding comes from Environment Canada and Learning for a Sustainable Future.

Vision

All Nova Scotians are living sustainably.

Mission

To advance sustainability in Nova Scotia through formal, non-formal and informal education that addresses environmental, social, and economic themes (please see **Definitions** on reverse).

Initiatives

Network Meetings: (Formal, Non-Formal and Informal) SENSE holds quarterly face-to-face and teleconference meetings around the province to provide an opportunity to learn from one another, to share resources, and to organize our activities with the aim of advancing our vision and mission.

Sustainable Development Resource Directory (Formal, Non-Formal and Informal) SENSE has completed the first phase of our online, public *Sustainability Resource Directory*. The purpose of this project is to: compile resources,

build capacity, improve efficiency, and identify gaps of material while simultaneously strengthening the network of people involved in sustainability education. The SENSE Directory contains publicly accessible resources, such as workshops, web sites, books, films etc... The Directory is searchable and self-managed whereby people can add new resources directly. Currently, there are almost 200 resources posted to the directory:
<http://www.nsen.ca/sense.php>

School Facilities Greening (Formal) SENSE has been working in schools in the Annapolis Valley and in Halifax to help green their facilities management and operations. We are working toward developing a standardized process for responsible facilities management.

The Ecological Footprint (Formal) SENSE is participating in a project to engage educational institutions in the use of the Ecological Footprint tool. SENSE partners have been going into classrooms and communities to educate for climate change and sustainability. More general information about the Eco-Footprint:
<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>

Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (Non-Formal) SENSE helped to launch the *Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative* (ACSI). ACSI is using *The Natural Step* framework to assist community groups, businesses and municipalities with their sustainable planning. More about ACSI: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca>

Annual Sustainability Education Symposium (Formal, Non-Formal and Informal) On March 29th and 30th, 2008 the *First Annual Sustainability Education Symposium: Peacebuilding & Earthkeeping: Creating a Culture of Respect for People and the Planet* will take place at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The symposium themes will focus on peace education and environmental education in the classroom and in the community. This symposium is organized by Peaceful Schools International, the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and Saint Mary's University. The symposium is a project of SENSE. Our key note speakers are: Dr. Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister of Education in Manitoba and a passionate champion of sustainability education, and Dr. Anita Wenden, co-founder of Earth and Peace Education Associates International based in New York. It will be an excellent opportunity for educators in the school system and in society to learn from each other and to share resources. The symposium will be linked to an *Art Contest: Trashformation 2008* and a free evening public forum on sustainability education. More information about the symposium and events are here: Nova Scotia Environmental Network www.nsen.ca and Peaceful Schools International: <http://peacefulschoolsinternational.org>

Definitions

- *Sustainable Development* is a concept from the report *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundtland Report, 1987) and refers to "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Government of Canada's *What is Sustainable Development*: http://www.canada2002earthsummit.gc.ca/about/what_e.cfm
- *Formal Education*: education through the school systems from primary/kindergarten to the end of high school as well as some aspects in colleges and universities.
- *Non-formal Education*: public awareness activities by organizations outside of the school system (e.g., Professional Development, Business Training, Environmental Street Theatre, Youth Forums etc...).
- *Informal Education*: Activities provided by media (e.g., articles, documentaries on radio and television etc...) and books, papers, etc.

Links

- *UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development*: <http://portal.unesco.org/education>
- *SENSE working group*: <http://www.nsen.ca/education.php>
- *Learning for a Sustainable Future*: <http://www.lsf-lst.ca>
- *Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative*: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca>
- *The Natural Step Canada*: <http://www.naturalstep.ca/>

Contact

Tamara Lorincz, Coordinator (SENSE) /Executive Director (NSEN)
Nova Scotia Environmental Network, 55 Willowbend Ct. Halifax, NS Canada B3M 3L3
Phone: 902-454-6846
Fax: 902-454-6841
Email: nsen@cen-rce.org / esd_novascotia@lsf-lst.ca
Web Site: www.nsen.ca